

The Remorseful Sinner



Lev Tolstoy

The Remorseful Sinner by Lev Tolstoy

"And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when you come into your Kingdom. And Jesus said to him, verily I say unto thee, now today shalt thou be with me in Heaven." (The Luke. XXIII, 42, 43)

A man lived in the world for 70 years, and spend his life in sins. And this man got ill and did not yet repent. And when death came in his last hour, he wept and said: "Oh, my Lord! Like the thief on the cross, forgive me!" Only managed to say – his soul came out. And the soul of sinner loved God, and believed in His mercy, and came to the doors of Heaven.

And the sinner started knocking and begging that he'd be allowed into the Kingdom of Heaven.

And he heard a voice from behind the door:

- What person is knocking on the doors of Heaven? And what deeds has this man done in the life?

And the voice of an accuser answered, and enumerated all the sinful deeds of this man, and didn't mention any good deeds.

And a voice from behind the door answered:

- Sinners cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Go away from here.

And the man said:

- My Lord! I hear your voice, but don't see your face, and don't know your name.

And the voice answered:

- I am Peter, the apostle.

And the sinner said:

- Take pity on me, Peter the Apostle, remember human weakness and the mercy of God. Weren't you a disciple of Christ, wasn't that you who heard his teaching from his mouth and saw the example of his life? And remember when he suffered and his soul mourned and three times he asked you to stay awake and pray, but you slept, because your eyes became heavy, and three

times he found you sleeping. I did just the same.

- And remember, that you, before his death, had promised not to renounce him, and that you denied him three times when he was led to Caiaphas. I did just the same.

- And also remember when a rooster crowed, and you came out and wept bitterly. I did just the same. You can't not let me in.

And the voice behind the doors of Heaven went silent.

And, after a short time, the sinner started again to knock and beg to be admitted in the Kingdom of Heaven.

And the other voice from behind the doors said:

- Who is this man? And how did he live in the world?

And the voice of an accuser answered, and again repeated all the bad deeds of the sinner, and didn't mention any good ones.

And a voice from behind the door answered:

- Go away from here: such sinners can't live with us in Heaven.

And the sinner said:

- Lord, I hear your voice, but I do not see your face, and I don't know your name.

And the voice said to him:

- I am David, king and prophet.

And the sinner did not despair, didn't move away from the doors of Heaven and began to say:

- Take pity on me, king David, and remember the human weakness and the mercy of God. God loved you and glorified you before men. All you had - and the kingdom, and glory, and wealth, and wife, and children, and you saw the wife of a poor man from the rooftop, and sin has entered in you and you took the wife of Uriah, and killed him himself with the sword of the Ammonites. You, the rich man, robbed the last lamb from a poor man and devoured him himself. So I did the same, too.

- And also remember how you repented and said: "I accept my guilt and repent my sin." So did I, you cannot but let me in.

And the voice behind the doors went silent.

And the sinner stood a little longer, again began to beg to be admitted into the Kingdom of Heaven. And he heard the third voice from behind the doors, which said:

- Who is this man? And how did he live in the world?

And the voice of an accuser answered, and the third time enumerated the evil deeds of the man, and did not mention any good.

And the voice from behind the door answered:

- Go away from here: sinners cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

And the sinner answered:

- I hear your voice, but do not see your face, and do not know your name.

And the voice answered:

- I am - St. John the Evangelist, the beloved disciple of Christ.

And the sinner rejoiced and said:

- Now it is impossible not to admit me: Peter and David will let me in because they know human weakness and the mercy of God. And you will let me in because you have a lot of love in you. Wasn't that you, John the Evangelist, who wrote in his book that God is Love, and that anyone who doesn't love, doesn't know God? Wasn't that you who, in his old age, told people just one word: "Brothers, love one another!" Would you now hate me and send me away? So renounce from what you said, or love me and let me in to the Kingdom of Heaven.

And the gates of Heaven got open, and John hugged the repentant sinner and admitted him into the Kingdom of Heaven.